

EPIGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

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1. EPIGRAPHY AND THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

By B. CH. CHHABRA

A RETROSPECTIVE glance over the ground covered during the fifty years under review, so far as epigraphical research in India is concerned, fills one with a sense of pride and satisfaction. It is a record of world scholarship working in unison for the cause of Indian history dating from the remote past. As a result of sustained efforts and devoted labour on the part of research-workers in the field, who, by the way, count among themselves many a savant of international repute, much has been retrieved from oblivion, revealing light has been thrown on many an obscure corner, and glorious chapters, one after another, have been added to the history as it is being reconstructed. It is indeed very difficult to form a correct estimate of the extent to which history, or rather historiography, in India has been benefited by epigraphy. It is simply immense!

The turn of the century, early in 1902, saw the Department of Archaeology in India enlarged and re-organized by its newly-appointed Director General, John H. Marshall, with the liberal support of the Government under the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon. The Department started an annual publication, called the *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India*, as its principal organ, in order to keep the scholarly world as well as the enlightened public abreast of the activities of the Department. Summing up its aims and objects, Marshall said: 'It will now be plain to the reader that, as the scope of this "Annual" is to be co-extensive with current archaeological operations, the contents will relate first and principally to Conservation, secondly, to Exploration and Research, and lastly, to Epigraphy.' Consequently, a substantial portion of this *Annual*, from year to year, was devoted to the announcement of fresh epigraphical discoveries, to their decipherment and interpretation, often in great detail, and to the distinct contribution such finds made to our knowledge of India's past. Though 'Epigraphy' is placed last among the archaeological operations, there is no gainsaying that it is Epigraphy that has yielded the most authentic data for the reconstruction of India's ancient history, not only political and administrative, but also religious, cultural, social and commercial. In addition, much welcome light is shed thereby on the contemporary literature and linguistics.

It is exceedingly gratifying to note that, at the time of writing this account, the father of the re-organized Department of Archaeology, Sir John Marshall, and one of his chief associates and colleagues, viz. Professor Dr. J. Ph. Vogel, whose scholarly contributions in the realm of Indian epigraphy, art and archaeology as also in that of Sanskrit literature are too well-known, are not only still in our midst but are also active in their scholarly pursuits, guiding the younger generation by their shining examples.

The turn of the century marked the second phase in the sphere of epigraphical research in India. Following the efforts of pioneers in the field, like Charles Masson and James Prinsep, the keys to the Kharoshthī and Brāhmī scripts had been found (above, p. 7). Legends on Indo-Bactrian and Western Kshatrapa coins had been deciphered and published, as also the inscriptions of Aśoka¹. Fleet had edited the inscriptions of the Gupta emperors, including those of their contemporary rulers and their successors till then known.² Hultzsch, to whom we owe a revised edition of Aśoka's edicts,³ had published many inscriptions of south India,⁴ notably those of the Pallavas, about whom the subsequent epigraphical discoveries furnished us with considerable additional information. Contributions by other prominent scholars, like A. C. Burnell, Rudolf Hoernle, Georg Bühler, Franz Kielhorn, Heinrich Lüders, James Burgess, Bhau Daji, Bhagawanlal Indraji and Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, had equally enriched the growing epigraphical literature in India. Bühler, Kielhorn, Lüders and many others of the older generation continued their research even afterwards, extending to the second phase.

If we turn the pages of earlier volumes of the *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India*, we find J. Ph. Vogel discovering Śāradā inscriptions in the Panjab Hill State of

¹ *An. Rep. Arch. Surv. Ind.*, 1902-03 (1904), p. 12.

² A. Cunningham, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, I (Calcutta, 1877).

³ J. F. Fleet, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and their Successors*, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III (Calcutta, 1888).

⁴ E. Hultzsch, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, I, new edition (London, 1925).

⁵ E. Hultzsch, *South Indian Inscriptions*, I-III (Madras, 1890-1929).

Chambā in the Himālayas¹ and J. Bloch and D. B. Spooner unearthing hundreds of terracotta seals and sealings at Basārḥ (ancient Vaiśālī) in Bihar². Vogel's explorations in Chambā State continued for about eight seasons during which he discovered a wealth of epigraphical material. He divided this material into two parts: (1) of pre-Muhammadan period and (2) of medieval and late period. The first is comprised in his masterly treatise entitled *Antiquities of Chambā State*.³ The second part he left unedited but is now under publication, having been edited by one of his pupils, viz. the writer of this article. The numerous seals and sealings of Basārḥ constitute a category of records quite distinct by themselves. This class of inscriptions has been very largely augmented by similar discoveries made subsequently at several other ancient sites like Kasiā,⁴ Saheṭh-Mahēṭh,⁵ Bhīṭā,⁶ Sunet, Nālandā,⁷ Rājghāt⁸ and Kauśāmbī, not to mention many a minor one. It is well-known to the student of Indian epigraphy how varied the contents are of the legends or inscriptions on these sealings: names of individuals, gods, temples, monasteries, guilds, places, as also titles and designations of various officials and dignitaries. These short records are a regular mine of information on various topics and, as such, deserve to be published all together at one place. As a matter of fact, a separate corpus volume ought to be devoted to these seals and sealings.

By far the most outstanding epigraphical discovery during the period under review is the seals discovered at Mohenjo-daro and Harappā, now in west Pakistan. As is well-known, the script of their legends, half pictorial and half symbolic, is an enigma to the whole world. Many scholars, both Indian and foreign, are busy in solving this riddle. Though much has been written on the subject, yet nobody seems to have hit the nail on the head so far.

A part of the re-organization of the Archaeological Survey of India was the setting up of a regular Epigraphical Branch with the express purpose of collecting inscriptions and publishing them. Dr. Hultzsch was the first Government Epigraphist for India. He had formerly been doing Dravidian epigraphy. At the time of the re-organization, however, he was about to retire. After him a Norwegian scholar, Dr. Sten Konow, was in charge of Indian epigraphy. He made a name for himself in the field of Kharoshthī inscriptions. For some time Professor F. W. Thomas of Oxford also conducted the affairs of the Epigraphical Branch, though he did not come to India for that purpose. Much of the work was done by Rao Bahadur V. Venkayya, formerly an assistant under Hultzsch. In course of time Venkayya became the Government Epigraphist. The post was later held in succession by Rao Bahadur H. Krishna Sastri, Dr. Hirananda Sastri, Dr. N. P. Chakravarti, Rao Bahadur Krishnamacharlu and the writer of this article.

The Epigraphical Branch conducted village-to-village surveys and collected on an average six hundred inscriptions every year, the bulk coming from the south India. Those discovered in the north, though fewer in number, included some very early and highly important records, specially the Kushan inscriptions from Mathurā and Taxila. The discovery of the rock inscription of Khāravela at Hāthigumphā near Bhuvaneśwar in

¹ *An. Rep. Arch. Surv. Ind.*, 1902-3, pp. 239-71.

² Th. Bloch, *ibid.*, 1903-04 (1906), pp. 101 ff.; D. B. Spooner, *ibid.*, 1913-14 (1917), pp. 110 ff.

³ J. Ph. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chambā State*, pt. i, *Arch. Surv. Ind.*, New Imp. Series, XXXVI (Calcutta, 1911).

⁴ *An. Rep. Arch. Surv. Ind.*, 1905-06 (1909), p. 83; 1906-07 (1909), pp. 63 ff.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1910-11 (1914), pp. 19 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1911-12 (1915), pp. 44 ff.

⁷ H. Sastri, *Nālandā and its Epigraphic Material*, *Mem. Arch. Surv. Ind.*, no. 66 (1942).

⁸ Krishna Deva, 'Coin devices on Rajghat seals', *Jour. Numismatic Soc. Ind.*, III pt. 2 (1941), pp. 73 ff.

Orissa was as important as that of Aśoka's edicts.¹ The period under review saw the discovery of additional inscriptions of Aśoka, the most conspicuous being that of Maski in Hyderabad, Deccan. This is the only record so far discovered wherein the emperor's personal name *Asoka* is specifically mentioned, all the remaining ones referring to him by his popular title *Devānāmpriya*.

It is not the purpose of this paper to review any of the important epigraphical discoveries that fall within the last half-a-century. Rather, we may broadly indicate the stage reached by the researches in this line. The thirty thousand and odd inscriptions brought to light have naturally changed the face of ancient Indian history. The new material placed at the disposal of the historians has not only added largely to our knowledge but also altered and corrected it in many places. A stage was reached when Aśokan inscriptions required to be re-edited, and this want was adequately fulfilled by the revised edition by Hultzsch.² Similarly, Fleet's volume on Gupta inscriptions called for a revision. Not only many additional Gupta inscriptions had come to light, but in the light of further researches Fleet's interpretation at places had to be modified. The task of re-editing Gupta inscriptions was entrusted to Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar, who spent years working on it but unfortunately could not see the results of his labour appear in print. He left the work almost finished in the rough typescript, which is being revised and press-dressed and is expected to be published before long. The Kharoshthī inscriptions other than those of Aśoka have been dealt with by Konow in a separate corpus volume.³ Another volume of non-Aśokan Brāhmī inscriptions had likewise been projected, and the work was entrusted to Lüders, who, like Bhandarkar, spent years in accomplishing the task. It is a matter of great regret, however, that the manuscript-material of his work was partly destroyed or lost during the last World War. Lüders has left a sample of the erudite scholarship, which was to be seen throughout his work had it survived, in an article of his on 'Seven Brahmi Inscriptions from Mathura and its vicinity' published in a not very distant issue of the *Epigraphia Indica*.⁴ It is quite likely that a part of Lüders' manuscript, dealing with the Brāhmī inscriptions from Bharhut, which has survived, may be published by the Department.

The two World Wars seriously hampered the publication-activity of the Epigraphical Branch, though its collection-work, acquisition of fresh epigraphs, either by village-to-village survey or through exploration or excavation, or on private information, has gone on more or less steadily from year to year. As a result thereof, the publication has lagged far behind the collection. The limited resources, in funds and personnel, of the Department have added to the difficulties. In spite of all this, several volumes of the *South Indian Inscriptions (Texts)* series have been published in recent years, while the quarterly journal entitled *Epigraphia Indica* has continued to appear, though it often fell into arrears, and during the Second World War its publication was suspended. The publication of the *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India* was stopped after the publication of the Report for 1937-38, with the result that the valuable epigraphical résumés it contained are no longer available to the public. To make up for the loss, a decennial report covering the period 1937-46 was published in an earlier number of *Ancient India*.⁵ In 1946 it was

¹ K. P. Jayaswal and R. D. Banerji, 'The Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela', *Epigraphia Indica*, XX (1929-30) pp. 71-89.

² Hultzsch, *op. cit.* (1925).

³ Sten Konow, *Kharoshthī Inscriptions*, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, II, pt. i (Calcutta, 1929).

⁴ H. Lüders, 'Seven Brahmi inscriptions from Mathura and its vicinity', *Epigraphia Indica*, XXIV (1937-38) pp. 194-210.

⁵ B. Ch. Chhabra, N. L. Rao and M. Ashraf Husain, 'Ten years of Indian epigraphy (1937-46)', *Ancient India*, no. 5 (1949), pp. 46-61.

decided that the scope of the *Annual Reports of South Indian Epigraphy*, published since 1905, should be enlarged to cover the whole of India. The first number of the new series, *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* for the year 1945-46, appeared in 1952, and the publication of the subsequent Reports is being speeded up.

After Fleet's volume on Gupta inscriptions, which constituted the third volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* series, no further volume has been issued in this series. Volume IV, which comprises inscriptions of the Kalachuris and those dated in the Kalachuri era, assigned to Professor V. V. Mirashi of the University of Nagpur, is going through the press and is expected to be out very soon.

As indicated above, the publication-work is not keeping pace with the collection-work. The Department is fully alive to the urgency and importance of publishing the thousands of accumulated inscriptions awaiting to be published. A comprehensive scheme for the future volumes of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* series, twenty in number, has been drawn up, indicating break-up and the assignment of different volumes to individual scholars, both in the Department and outside.

Before closing this fleeting survey, it may be recalled that Burma was formerly a part of India and constituted a separate Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India. That Circle also did much epigraphical work, reports on which by Mr. Taw Sein Ko and others are found in the *Annual Reports* of the Survey.

It may further be noted that in India itself, some of the princely States, such as Kashmir, Gwalior, Baroda, Mysore, Travancore and Hyderabad, had their own Departments of Archaeology, and in many cases their successors have retained these Departments. They also contributed much to the epigraphical wealth of the country. Besides, many a learned society in India, engaged upon Indological researches, such as the Asiatic Society (formerly known as the Asiatic Society of Bengal or Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal), the Bihar and Orissa Research Society and the Kannada Research Institute, has accomplished much of epigraphical research in India through its energetic members.

In this connexion we may also remember the co-operation received from the agencies working outside India. Similar researches done in Indonesia as well as in Thailand, Cambodia, Malaya, etc., had much in common with India.

The activities of the Department of Archaeology as a whole have increased very greatly after the attainment of political independence by India and on the merging of the States with the Union. The work in the Epigraphical Branch has also proportionately increased, calling for a reinforcement of the Branch. Steps are being taken in that direction.

The future of epigraphical research in India will depend upon the scholars trained in that line. At the present moment their number is woefully small and, what is worse, is dwindling day by day. Amongst the Indologists outside India there are very few who take interest in Indian epigraphy. The same may be said of those in India itself. Some of the universities in India have provision for teaching epigraphy, but not many students take advantage of that. To popularize this subject among the budding scholars is an uphill task indeed, and special efforts will have to be made for achieving success therein. It may, in fine, be observed that hundreds of ancient sites in India lie yet unexcavated and even unexplored and that each one of them holds out a promise of a wealth of epigraphical material, to do justice to which bands of trained epigraphists will be in demand for generations to come.

2. INSCRIPTIONS IN SANSKRITIC AND DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES

By D. C. SIRCAR

Epigraphy is the study of inscriptions, and 'inscription' literally means any writing engraved on some object. In India, rocks as well as lithic, metallic, earthen or wooden pillars (pls. CIX and CX, 4), tablets, plates, pots (pl. CXII, 2), bricks (pl. CXII, 4) and other objects were generally used for incising inscriptions.¹ Often, writing in relief such as we find in the legends on coins (pl. CIV, 1-6) and seals (pls. CIII, CIV, 7 and CV), which are usually produced out of moulds or dies, and also records painted on cave walls or written in ink on wooden tablets are regarded as inscriptions, although these writings are not actually engraved. As is usually the case with inscriptions in the Perso-Arabic script, the letters of certain late medieval records are generally not engraved but are formed by scooping out the space around them.

A. IMPORTANCE OF EPIGRAPHY

For the ancient and medieval periods of Indian history, the study of inscriptions has a special importance. No doubt India contributed to the civilization of the world in all periods of history; but her more significant contributions to world culture were made in the early period. The study of early Indian history has, therefore, great importance to the student of the history of human civilization. Unfortunately, unlike Greece, Rome or China, ancient India has no history, because the Indians of antiquity did not care to leave written accounts of all their achievements. Ancient India did not produce a Herodotos, Thucydides or Tacitus to leave for posterity a genuine and comprehensive history of the achievements of her sons. Therefore, the information gathered from various sources, such as the literary, epigraphic, numismatic, archaeological and monumental records, is to be utilized to reconstruct this lost history of the most glorious days of India. Of all such sources for the reconstruction of early Indian history, epigraphic records are the most important, for they provide material for the major part of what we know about the achievements of the Indians of old.

Writing in 1839, Elphinstone observed in his famous *History of India* that in Indian history 'no date of a public event can be fixed before the invasion of Alexander and no connected relation of the national transactions can be attempted until up to the Muhammadan conquest'.² In 1866 Cowell accepted the truth of Elphinstone's dictum in regard to the whole of the so-called Hindu period of Indian history, for he pointed out that 'it is only at those points where other nations came into contact with the Hindus that we are able to settle any details accurately'.³ But the activities of a multitude of scholars working in the various branches of ancient Indian history led to the gradual discovery and

¹ Occasionally epigraphs were engraved on conch (pl. CXII, 3) and tortoise shells, ivory plaques and other materials. Manuscripts and communications were usually written on birch-bark sheets, palmyra leaves, etc. Sometimes letters were merely scratched on palmyra leaves with styli. Often communications and documents were written on pieces of cloth, while there is also reference to manuscripts written on silk.

² M. Elphinstone, *History of India*, ed. E. B. Cowell, 5th ed. (London, 1866), p. 11.

³ *Ibid.*; cf. V. A. Smith, *Early History of India*, 4th ed. (Oxford, 1924), p. 1.

accumulation of an unexpected wealth of material for its reconstruction. The achievements of ancient Indian rulers recorded in inscriptions on stone and copper plates were undoubtedly the most important of this. As early as 1837, the necessity of arranging epigraphical records systematically for the reconstruction of the ancient history of India was pointed out by James Prinsep, to whom goes the credit of first placing the study of Indian archaeology on a sound and critical foundation. Many inscriptions appeared in periodicals like the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* (published by the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, established in 1784), the *Indian Antiquary* (started by Burgess in 1872) and others.¹ Out of the numerous epigraphic records discovered till then, Alexander Cunningham collected those of Asoka in a volume,² and J. F. Fleet edited the inscriptions of the Gupta age³ as Epigraphist of the Government of India (1883-86). E. Hultzsch, as Epigraphist to the Government of Madras, 1886-1903, published the first volume of his *South Indian Inscriptions* in 1890. About a year earlier, Burgess, Cunningham's successor as Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, started an official journal entitled *Epigraphia Indica* exclusively for the publication of inscriptions.⁴

B. RECONSTRUCTION OF EARLY INDIAN HISTORY

About the beginning of the present century, V. A. Smith published his celebrated work entitled *Early History of India*, in which an attempt to 'sort and arrange the accumulated stores of knowledge' in a somewhat connected account of the political and cultural history of ancient India was made for the first time. The book was revised and enlarged in subsequent editions published in 1908, 1914 and 1924, the last one appearing shortly after the author's death. The importance of the discovery and study of new inscriptions in the reconstruction of ancient Indian history and the progress made year after year becomes perfectly clear from a comparative study of the editions of Smith's work and H. C. Raychaudhuri's *Political History of Ancient India*, first published in 1923 and revised in 1927, 1931, 1938, 1950 and 1953. But, though much progress has been made, there are still innumerable gaps in the early period of Indian history, and numerous problems still await solution by further discoveries and studies.

The work of the reconstruction of the early period of Indian history was inaugurated by European scholars in the eighteenth century. Later on Indians also became interested in the subject. The credit for the decipherment of early Indian inscriptions, written in

¹For a short account of the early phase of epigraphical studies, especially in south India, see J. F. Fleet, *Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts*, 2nd ed. (Bombay, 1882), pp. 11 ff.

²A. Cunningham, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, I (Calcutta, 1877).

³J. F. Fleet, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and their Successors*, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III (Calcutta, 1888).

⁴The first volume of *Epigraphia Indica* (completely published by 1892) was edited by J. Burgess with the assistance of E. Hultzsch, Epigraphist to the Government of Madras, and A. Führer, Archaeological Surveyor, North-Western Province and Oudh. The second volume was also edited by Burgess assisted by Führer. The next four volumes (1894-95 to 1900-01) were edited by Hultzsch as Epigraphist to the Government of Madras, and the seventh and eighth ones (1901-1907), together with a few parts of the ninth (1907-08), by the same scholar as Professor in the University of Halle. The later parts of the ninth volume were edited by Sten Konow as Government Epigraphist for India. Sten Konow's successor in office was Rao Bahadur V. Venkayya, followed several years after his death (1912) by Rao Bahadur H. Krishna Sastri. During the interval between Venkayya's death and Krishna Sastri's appointment, some volumes and parts of the journal were edited from abroad by Sten Konow and F. W. Thomas.

the Brāhmī and Kharoshthī alphabets, which paved the way of epigraphical and historical studies in India, is due to scholars like Prinsep, Lassen, Norris and Cunningham. A key to the decipherment of the alphabets was supplied by the coins of the Indo-Greek kings with bilingual and bicultural legends and certain edicts of the Mauryan emperor Aśoka written both in Brāhmī and Kharoshthī. The words 'of king so-and-so' are found on the coins in question both in the Greek language and script and in the Kharoshthī alphabet (rarely in Brāhmī) and the Prakrit language. Some letters and signs were also deciphered with the help of numerous dedicatory Brāhmī inscriptions in the same language, all of them ending with the expression *dānam*, meaning 'a gift', preceded by the donor's name in the sixth case-ending (*sa=ssa=ssa*). Indian epigraphic studies owe a great debt to many other European savants like G. Bühler, E. Senart, F. Kielhorn, E. Hultzsch, L. Rice, W. E. Elliot and J. F. Fleet, as well as to Indian scholars like Bhagwanlal Indraji, Rajendralala Mitra, R. G. Bhandarkar, R. D. Banerji, D. R. Bhandarkar, H. P. Sastri, V. Venkayya, H. Krishna Sastri and others.

The great part played by inscriptions, including legends on coins and seals, in the reconstruction of the history of ancient India can be demonstrated by an example. No imperial ruler named Budhagupta was known till the beginning of the nineteenth century. A stone inscription mentioning Surāsmichandra, a viceroy of king Budhagupta, was discovered at Éran in Sāgar District of Madhya Pradesh in 1838.¹ The record, bearing a date in the Gupta year 165, corresponding to A.D. 484-85, states that Mātrivishṇu, ruler of Éran, was subordinate to Budhagupta's viceroy governing a province lying between the rivers Kālindī (Yamunā) and Narmadā. Thus we came to learn that a king named Budhagupta held sway over the Mālhwā region in 484-85. Some silver coins of Budhagupta were discovered in 1894, and they were found to have been issued in the Gupta year 175, corresponding to A.D. 494-95.² It was thus further learnt that Budhagupta, king of Mālhwā, reigned for about ten years between 484 and 495. In 1914-15 two inscriptions belonging to Budhagupta's reign were discovered at Sārnāth near Banaras³ and were found to be dated in the Gupta year 157 (A.D. 476-77). Thus we came to learn that king Budhagupta was not a local ruler of the Mālhwā region but that his dominions included considerably large portions of the U.P. It was also clear that he ruled not for about ten years but at least for about eighteen years between 476 and 495. The extension of Budhagupta's dominions from Mālhwā in the west to Banaras in the east led to the suspicion that he might have belonged to the Imperial Gupta house of Magadha. This possibility was nearly proved in 1919-20, when two copper-plate inscriptions⁴ of the same king were found at Dāmodarpur in Dinājpur District, north Bengal. These indicated the inclusion of the northern part of Bengal within the vast empire of Budhagupta. But even then we were in the dark about the exact position of Budhagupta in the genealogy of the Imperial Guptas of Magadha. In 1943, however, the study of the legend on a damaged clay seal⁵ of Budhagupta, discovered at Nālandā (Patna District, Bihar), proved that he was the son of Pūrugupta, grandson of Kumāragupta I Mahendrāditya, great-grandson of Chandragupta II Vikramāditya and great-great-grandson of the mighty Samudragupta of the Imperial Gupta dynasty of Magadha. Thus, after the lapse of more than a century from 1838 to 1943, fairly complete information about the position of an ancient Indian monarch named Budhagupta was available to the students of early Indian

¹ Fleet, *op. cit.*, pp. 88 ff.

² J. Allan, *Catalogue of Coins of the Gupta Dynasties etc.* (London, 1914), pp. lxii and 153.

³ *An. Rep. Arch. Surv. Ind.*, 1914-15 (1920), p. 125.

⁴ *Epigraphia Indica*, XV (1919-20), pp. 134 ff.

⁵ *Ind. Hist. Quart.*, XIX (1943), pp. 119 ff. and 272 ff.

history. Unfortunately, however, many facts associated with the reign of this ruler have still to be recovered. This gathering of information bit by bit is of absorbing interest to all investigators in the field of Indian historical research. The students of Indian history, who studied the Eran inscription in 1838, Budhagupta's coins in 1894, the Sarnāth inscriptions in 1914-15, the Dāmodarpur plates in 1919-20 and the Nālandā seal in 1943, must have felt 'like some watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken'.

C. DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING

(i) *The Indus script*

The seals discovered at the ancient sites of Harappā in West Panjab and Mohenjo-daro in Sind (pl. CIII, 1 and 2), both of them now forming parts of West Pakistan, offer the oldest specimens of writing in India. At the dawn of human civilization man learnt how to express his ideas by drawing pictures. Writing with the help of an alphabet consisting of a limited number of signs with specific sound-values gradually developed out of this ancient custom in different parts of the world after hundreds of years. The legends on the seals of Harappā and Mohenjo-daro represent an intermediate stage between the pictographic and alphabetic forms of writing. It is a matter of regret that this oldest writing of India has not yet been deciphered. Its mystery is not likely to be finally solved before the discovery of biscriptal and bilingual epigraphs containing writings in this script together with their transliteration or translation in a known alphabet and language. The ancient writing on the seals of Mohenjo-daro and Harappā may have ultimately developed into the Brāhmī alphabet several centuries before the rise of the Mauryas in the latter half of the fourth century B.C.

(ii) *Brāhmī*

The Maurya emperors ruled over the major portion of the Indian sub-continent as well as over parts of Afghanistan. Maurya inscriptions, which have been found outside the Uttarāpatha division of ancient Bhāratavarsha, lying roughly between eastern Panjab and the Oxus river in Central Asia, are written in the Brāhmī alphabet. In modern times the letters of an alphabet are learnt from their fixed forms supplied by the printed text-books. In the olden days, however, the knowledge of alphabet was transmitted from teacher to pupil. The want of a definitely fixed model as well as the natural eagerness of man to write quickly led to the gradual modification in the forms of Brāhmī letters. This ultimately gave rise to the various regional alphabets of India. Brāhmī is the mother not only of all the Indian alphabets of today but also of the alphabets of other countries which came in early times under the influence of Indian civilization. The alphabets of Ceylon, Tibet, Burma, Siam (Thailand), Malaisia, Indonesia and French Indo-China are derivatives of the Indian Brāhmī script.

(iii) *Kharoshthī*

The edicts of the Maurya emperor Aśoka (269-232 B.C.), discovered in the present Peshawar and Hazārā Districts forming parts of ancient Uttarāpatha, are written in the Kharoshthī alphabet. Kharoshthī was an Indian modification of the old Aramaic script of western Asia, which was popularized in north-western Bhāratavarsha during the rule

of the Achaemenian emperors of Iran. Portions of Uttarāpatha formed a part of the Achaemenian empire for about two centuries before the rise of the Mauryas. Some inscriptions in the Aramaic script have also been discovered in that region.¹ Kharoshthī flourished for several centuries in Uttarāpatha and the neighbouring areas of Central Asia and afterwards died a natural death, as it was not quite suited for transcribing words of the Sanskrit language. Some interesting records in this script are the Prakrit (often greatly influenced by Sanskrit and the local dialects) documents on wooden tablets discovered in Central Asia. Such epigraphs found at Niya have been assigned to the third century, while some records from Kucha belong to the seventh century. In India the latest Kharoshthī documents, from Taxila, have been ascribed to the fifth century.

D. SANSKRIT AND PRAKRIT IN EARLY INSCRIPTIONS

The language of the early epigraphs of India is Prakrit, superseded as the language of the royal courts by Sanskrit at a later date. The earliest Sanskrit inscriptions have been found in the western part of northern India; they belong to the early two centuries of the Christian era when that region was under the domination of foreigners like the Scythians and the Kushans. It appears that Sanskrit as the court language was originally patronized by the foreign rulers of Uttarāpatha. Prakrit was practically ousted by Sanskrit from north Indian epigraphs before the end of the third century A.D., but it took another century for the complete victory of Sanskrit over Prakrit in the courts of the kings of southern India. The latest Prakrit records of rulers who flourished in the southernmost areas of India are assignable to about the middle of the fourth century. Regional languages, employed in writing documents in that region during the early medieval period, appear in north Indian records several centuries later. A number of early inscriptions may be regarded as specimens of *kāvya* in prose or verse, composed by poets usually attached to the royal courts. The Jūnāgarh (Saurāshtra) inscription of Rudradāman I² (middle of the second century A.D.), the Allahabad (U.P.) pillar inscription of Samudragupta³ (middle of the fourth century A.D.), the Tālagunda (Shimoga District, Mysore) inscription of Śāntivarman⁴ (middle of the fifth century), the Aihole (Bijāpur District, Bombay State) inscription of Pulakeśin II⁵ (first half of the seventh century A.D.) and many others belong to this class. A few early inscriptions in Prakrit may be similarly classed as *gadya-kāvyas*; cf. the Nāsik (Bombay State) cave-inscription⁶ of the nineteenth regnal year of Pulumāyi and the Nāgārjunakondā (Guntur District, Andhra State) inscription of the fourteenth year of Vīrapurushadatta.⁷

E. DIFFERENT KINDS OF EPIGRAPHS

Inscriptions may vary greatly in point of length. Sometimes an epigraph may contain only a mark or one single word or expression, indicating the name of an individual, often

¹ Cf. *Ep. Ind.*, XIX (1927-28), pp. 251 ff. Besides these and the inscriptions written in Arabic and Persian, there are certain records, mostly late, in other foreign languages and scripts. See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 300 ff.; J. J. Cotton, *List of Inscriptions on Tombs or Monuments in Madras* (Madras, 1905); etc.

² *Ep. Ind.*, VII (1905-06), pp. 76 ff.

³ Fleet, *op. cit.*, pp. 1 ff.

⁴ *Ep. Ind.*, VIII, pp. 24 ff.

⁵ *Ibid.*, VI (1900-01), pp. 1 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 60.

⁷ *Ibid.*, XX (1929-30), p. 16.

a pilgrim at a holy religious establishment engraving his name on a wall or stone to commemorate his visit or standing as the label of a sculptured scene from the epics or the Jātakas. Somewhat longer inscriptions may record the dedication of the images of deities (pl. CX, 1 and 2) or commemorate such events as the fall of a hero in battle (pl. CX, 3 and CXI, 2), or such curious social customs as the self-immolation of a widow (pl. CXII, 1) and head-offering (pl. CXI, 1). In some cases, however, an inscription may embody a *kāvya* in many cantos or a drama in several acts. The Udaipur (Rajasthan) Rājasamudra inscription¹ falls in the first category, while the Ajmer *Lalitavigraharāja* and *Harakeli-nātaka* inscriptions² are instances of the second type. The Kuḍumiyamalai (Pudukottai, Madras State) inscription³ contains a unique seventh-century work on musical notations.

Epigraphic records may be broadly classified under two groups: (1) those engraved by or on behalf of the ruling authority and (2) those incised on behalf of private individuals or organizations. The largest number of epigraphs of the second category record donations made in favour of religious establishments or installation of images for worship. They are usually incised on the objects that were donated or installed, and are, as a rule, small. In some cases, however, they mention the king during whose reign the grant was made or the installation took place. Innumerable dedicatory inscriptions, big and small, are engraved on the walls, etc., of reputed religious establishments and centres of pilgrimage, such as the temples at Bhuvaneśwar, Drākshārāma, Śrīkūrmam, Simhāchalam, Śīrangam, Kānchīpuram, Lalgudi (pl. CVIII) and other places.⁴ The majority of the donations recorded in these epigraphs were made by pilgrims, some of whom were kings, chiefs or royal officers. In some cases, people are known to have made donations in favour of such temples *in absentia*. Pilgrims visiting the temples in the course of pilgrimage often carried with them a written eulogy with a view to getting it engraved on a temple wall after having made the desired donations. Eulogistic compositions, called *prastāvis*, were sometimes composed and engraved on stone tablets or pillars to commemorate public works like the excavation of a tank or step-well or the construction of a temple by a royal or ordinary personage or a group of individuals. The ruler of the country is usually mentioned in such works composed on behalf of private persons or officials. Even private records, therefore, often offer valuable information for the reconstruction of political and cultural history as well as for other allied subjects such as topography. The Uttiramerur (Chingleput District, Madras) inscriptions⁵ throw very welcome light on the village administration in southern India during the tenth century.

By far the most important are, however, the records incised by or on behalf of the ruling authority. These inscriptions may be classified under such heads as: (1) royal edicts (e.g. the rock and pillar edicts of the Maurya emperor Aśoka), (2) epigraphs commemorating particular achievements of a king in a eulogistic *kāvya* or *prastāvis* (cf. the Jūnāgarh, Allahabad and Aihole inscriptions referred to above), (3) grants in favour of learned Brahmans, religious institutions or deserving individuals and officials, and (4) miscellaneous.

¹ *Ep. Ind.*, XXIX (1951), Appendix, pp. 1 ff.

² *Indian Antiquary*, XX (1891), pp. 201 ff.

³ *Ep. Ind.*, XII (1913-14), pp. 226 ff.

⁴ *South Indian Inscriptions*, IV (1924), nos. 99 ff., etc., and 1006 ff.; V (1926), nos. 1150 ff.; VI (1928), nos. 678 ff. and 692 ff., etc.

⁵ *An. Rep. Arch. Surv. Ind.*, 1904-05 (1908), pp. 131 ff.

F. COPPER-PLATE GRANTS (pls. CVI and CVII)

Epigraphs recording grants of land were usually engraved on copper plates. Early works on law, such as the *Yājñavalkya-smṛiti*, I. xiii. 318 ff., and *Vishnu-smṛiti*, III. 83, speak of the preparation of *rāja-sāsana*s, i.e. royal charters recording grants of land, property, etc. The work of Yājñavalkya is believed to have been composed about the fourth century A.D., while that of Vishnu probably belongs to a slightly later date. When a grant of land, etc., was made by the king, a *lekhyā* or document was made for the guidance of future rulers of the country with reference to the privileges the donee was allowed to enjoy. The record was then written on a piece of cloth (*paṭa*) or incised on copper plates or a copper tablet (*paṭṭa*) with a view to making it a permanent charter. A description of the king making the grant and his three immediate predecessors as well as that of the donee formed a part of the document, which also included details regarding the boundaries and measurement, etc., of the gift land and a request by the donor to the effect that future rulers should not resume it.¹ A *lekhyā* was endowed with the king's seal and signature and the date of issue. The draft of the charter was to be written by a high official of the king such as the minister for war and peace. The *Vyāsa-smṛiti*,² of about the sixth century, says that the draft of a charter was first to be written on a slab or the floor with a piece of chalk and later rewritten on the proper object after correction. This description agrees with some of the actual specimens of copper-plate grants. The earliest of such charters so far discovered may be assigned to a date of about the end of the third century. It is the Mayidavolu (Guntur District, Andhra) plates³ issued by the Pallava crown-prince Śivaskandavarman of Kāñchīpura. But the texts of some earlier charters issued by rulers of the Śaka and Sātavahana families of the second century A.D. are found engraved on the walls of certain west Indian caves such as those at Nāsik.⁴

Copper plates of small size were originally employed in writing royal documents recording grants of land. Naturally they were slightly bigger in size when only one plate was used in writing a charter than when several of them were employed. Such records often mentioned the donor alone, but sometimes the name of his father was added. In many cases, however, the donor is found to be introduced as the son, grandson and great-grandson of particular rulers. But such details are not generally found in single-plate records of smaller size. An elaborate description of the achievements of the donor and his ancestors does not usually find place in the earlier copper-plate inscriptions.

Some kings of the Kāthiāwār region issued charters incised on the inner sides of two plates, the outer sides being kept blank. The majority of the multi-plate documents of the early period were, however, written on three plates. The records of the Somavamśi kings of Orissa speak of such charters as *triphali-tāmrāsana*⁵, i.e. a deed written on three

¹ J. Jolly, *Hindu Law and Customs*, tr. B. K. Ghosh (Calcutta, 1928), pp. 248-49. Such records were very valuable to the donee, as their loss made the rent-free gift lands in his possession revenue-paying unless fresh grants could be secured from the ruler in respect of the land in question. The copper plates were, therefore preserved carefully, sometimes in stone coffers or earthen jars hidden underground (cf. pl. CVI). There are instances when a donee or his descendant is known to have carried the document with him even when he started for a distant place on pilgrimage. Cf. *Ep. Ind.*, II (1894), pp. 250 ff.; XXVIII, pp. 175 f. For some fully or partially rent-paying grants, see *Jour. Roy. Asiatic Soc.*, 1952, pp. 4 ff.

² See quotation in the *Vyavahāra-tattva* and in the *Śabda-kalpadrūpa*, s.v. *phalaka*.

³ *Ep. Ind.*, VI, pp. 86 ff. For somewhat earlier records see the Taxila and Kalawān plates and Taxila silver scroll, *Ep. Ind.*, IV (1896-97), pp. 55 f; XXI (1931-32), p. 259; XIV (1917-18), p. 295.

⁴ *Proc. Ind. Hist. Congress*, Lahore (1940), pp. 52 ff.

⁵ Cf. *Ep. Ind.*, III (1894-95), pp. 346 f.

plates or tablets of copper. The outer sides of the first and third plates of these records are usually uninscribed. This practice was no doubt meant for the preservation of the writing. Sometimes the borders of the inscribed sides of the plates were slightly raised so that the writing might not be rubbed out. One of the biggest of such three-plate records is the Paithan epigraph¹ (A.D. 1272) of the Yādava king Rāmachandra. The plates are each 20½ by 15 in. and together weigh 2,300 *tolas*. They are strung on two rings weighing 457 *tolas*, one of which bears the royal seal with the emblem of Garuḍa. The total weight of the charter is thus 2,757 *tolas* (70½ lbs.). There are altogether one hundred and eighteen lines of writing on the plates.

A tendency to introduce an elaborate eulogy of the donor and his ancestors in the copper-plate grants gradually developed. This is specially noticed in the charters issued by imperial rulers. As a result of this, even those dynasties which engraved their charters on single plates (e.g. the Pālas and Senas of eastern India) had to use plates of a bigger size. Thus, the Monghyr plate of Devapāla² measures 18¾ by 13¾ in. and the Naihāṭi plate of Ballālasena³ 15 by 13¾ in. Such epigraphs often contain about seventy lines of writing. The weight of a single plate (19 by 13 in.), without any seal, bearing an inscription (in twentyfour lines) of the Gāhaḍavāla Govindachandra (circa 1114-55) on only one of its faces, and now preserved in the Bharat Kala Bhawan, Banaras, is 372½ *tolas*.

Among the early dynasties that used more than one copper plates for their documents, we may mention the Pallavas of south India, the Vākātakas of Berar, the Maitrakas of Valabhī and the Bhaumas of Prāgyorisha. The Nidhanpur inscription of the Bhauma king Bhāskaravarman⁴ (seventh century) was originally written at least in about one hundred and seventy lines on as many as six or seven plates. The records of the Eastern Gaṅga emperors of medieval Orissa were usually incised on six or seven plates, which, together with the seal-ring, often weighed more than one thousand *tolas*. One of the Puri copper-plate inscriptions of the Gaṅga Narasiṃha IV,⁵ who ascended the throne about 1378, contains no less than two hundred and seventy-eight lines of writing. But the biggest copper-plate inscriptions so far discovered belong to the Chōla dynasty of the Tanjore-Tiruchirāpalli area of south India. The larger Leiden inscription of Rājārāja I⁶ (985-1016) has four hundred and forty-three lines of writing engraved on twentyone plates. The Tiruvalangādu inscriptions dated in the sixth regnal year of Rājārāja's son Rājendra I⁷ (1016-43), is written on thirtyone plates which, together with the massive seal-ring, weigh 7,980 *tolas* (199½ lbs.) and bear eight hundred and sixteen lines of writing. But the biggest copper-plate charter so far discovered is the Karandai inscription of the eighth regnal year of the same Chōla monarch.⁸ It is engraved on no less than fiftyfive plates which measure 16½ by 9½ in. each and together weigh, even without the seal-ring, 8,645 *tolas* (216½ lbs.). The weight of one of the two seal-rings found with the plates is 753 *tolas*. The inscription contains upwards of two thousand and five hundred lines of writing. The first three plates, containing one hundred and thirtyone lines, give the genealogy of the Chōlas up to

¹ *Indian Antiquary*, XIV (1885), pp. 314 ff.

² *Ep. Ind.*, XVIII (1925-26), pp. 304 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, XIV (1917-18), pp. 159 ff.

⁴ P. N. Bhattacharya, *Kāmarūpa-śāsanāvali* (Rangpur, 1931), pp. 1 ff.

⁵ *Jour. Asiatic Soc. Bengal*, LXIV (1895), pp. 136 ff.

⁶ *Ep. Ind.*, XXII (1933-34), pp. 213 ff.

⁷ *South Indian Inscriptions*, III, pt. 4 (1920), pp. 383 ff.

⁸ *Jour. Oriental Res.*, XIX (1950), p. 148.

Rājendra I and record the gift of a village in favour of certain Brahmans. The next twentytwo plates (in one thousand and fortyone lines) contain a eulogy of the king as well as a description of the boundaries of the gift village and the names of the officials and other persons associated with the grant. The last thirty plates (one thousand three hundred and sixtyseven lines) quote the names of the donees together with the names of their *gotras*, places of residence, etc. The number of donees thus enumerated is no less than one thousand and seventythree. We know that, while describing the boundless liberality of a king, a poet sometimes spoke of the dearth of copper that resulted from the issue of innumerable copper-plate grants by the former.¹ Considering the great bulk of the copper charters of the Chola monarchs, we have to admit that the statement, hyperbolic though it is, may not, at least in some cases, be entirely without foundation.

G. ENGRAVING OF INSCRIPTIONS

Often illiterate or semi-literate stone-cutters or goldsmiths were entrusted with the task of engraving records on stone or copper plates, and this fact accounts for the numerous errors noticed in a large number of epigraphs, especially those engraved on behalf of private individuals.² We have many instances of badly engraved records even among royal charters, especially those issued by minor ruling families. The Banaras plate of the Kalachuri Karṇa³ (circa 1040-71) offers an instance of an imperial charter written and engraved by irresponsible and incompetent persons. But the grant was made when the king was stationed at Prayāga (Allahabad) in the course of a tour of pilgrimage, and it is possible that the work of engraving the charter was entrusted to a novice who could not read the writing of the draft properly. Usually, however, powerful kings had in their service trained and competent engravers who performed their work creditably. A high officer or a learned man of the court was sometimes engaged for writing a record on stone or copper plates with ink or a pointed instrument.⁴ This was meant to facilitate the work of the engraver and also to ensure the correctness of the inscription. The Deopāṛā stone inscription⁵ of king Vijayasena of Bengal is known to have been engraved by a renowned artist named Śūlapāṇi, who was the president of a guild of the artisans of Varendra (north Bengal) and enjoyed the feudatory title of *Rāṇaka*. The neat and beautiful incision of the inscription excites our admiration. The Tālaguṇḍa inscription, which is a *prāśasti* composed by Kubja, court poet of the Kadamba Śāntivarman of the Karṇāṭa country, was written on the stone slab by the poet himself so that the engraver succeeded in performing his work neatly without committing mistakes.

H. EULOGIES IN INSCRIPTIONS

The grant of a village or even a small piece of land is often found to have been made the subject of an elaborate eulogy or *prāśasti*. But compositions meant for the commemoration of victories in war or the construction of a temple or excavation of a tank were usually

¹ Ballāla's *Bhojaprabandha* (Nirnaya-sagara Press, 1932), p. 34, verse 162.

² According to the *Mitāksharā* on the *Yājñavalkya-smṛiti*, II. 89, a royal deed had to be written in correct and elegant language, although documents of ordinary people, which were not required to be written in correct Sanskrit, could be written in local dialects.

³ *Ep. Ind.*, II, pp. 305 ff.

⁴ *An. Rep. Arch. Surv. Ind.*, 1910-11 (1914), p. 74.

⁵ *Ep. Ind.*, I (1892), pp. 307 ff.

engraved on tablets or pillars of stone. Generally such records are big, although private pillar inscriptions recording the death of a hero or the self-immolation of a *sati*, which are numerous in the southern and western parts of India, are often small. Detailed information about the achievements of a king and his ancestors, found in the elaborate *prasastis*, is of inestimable value for the reconstruction of ancient and medieval Indian history, especially because most of the facts supplied by them are in many cases not known from any other source. Often the history of a royal family has been reconstructed almost entirely on the basis of inscriptions including legends on coins and seals. A case in point is that of the mighty Guptas of Magadha. The achievements of the great Samudragupta (circa 340-76), who ruled from Pāṭaliputra near Patna but subdued wide areas of north India and penetrated as far as Kāñchīpura (Chingleput District, Madras State) in the south, are only known from his Allahabad pillar inscription. Similarly, the exploits of the army of the Chola monarch Rājendra I of the Tamil land, which advanced in a victorious march as far as Bengal in the east, and of his navy that established Chola authority in Malaisia and Indonesia are known from inscriptions alone.¹

But the *prasastis* of the medieval rulers of India often contain an amount of exaggeration which partially mars their value as a source of history. The court poets' tendency to exaggerate is well illustrated by an inscription² of the Chandella king Dhaṅga (circa 950-1002) at Khajurāho (Chhatarpur District, Vindhya Pradesh), a stanza whereof implies that the monarch crushed many kings including the rulers of Kāñchī, Andhra, Rādhā (south-west Bengal) and Aṅga (east Bihar) and had the queens of all the defeated monarchs imprisoned in his capital. There is little doubt that the claim is an exaggeration. First, it is doubtful if Dhaṅga at all came into collision with all the four kings mentioned in the record, even if the rulers of Aṅga and Rādhā are taken to have been merely viceroys of the contemporary Pāla emperor of Bengal and Bihar. Secondly, even if Dhaṅga actually fought with the four kings, it is more doubtful that he succeeded in defeating all of them. Thirdly, supposing that he came off victorious in all the four cases, it is really difficult to believe that he succeeded also in carrying off the queens of all his adversaries. Fourthly, even granting that Dhaṅga actually captured the wives of his adversaries, he is normally expected to have placed the ladies in his harem or in charge of his favourite subordinates rather than in prison. Historians have, therefore, to be careful in determining the truth of a claim put forth in the *prasastis* of medieval Indian kings.

Such gross exaggerations are, however, scarcely noticeable in the description of kings found in records of the earlier periods. For this reason, in spite of the fact that there is always an amount of exaggeration in the royal *prasastis* composed by the court poets of Indian monarchs, the earlier the king is the greater is our reliance on his claims. The compositions of the *prasastikāra* usually abound in indefinite praises of his patron and the latter's ancestors. Vague claims are generally less reliable than definite statements, such as the mention of the personal names of adversaries. Whatever be the nature of the exaggeration, there is undoubtedly a very considerable amount of truth in the claims put forward in records like the Allahabad pillar inscription of the Gupta emperor Samudragupta and the Tirumalai rock inscription of the Chola monarch Rājendra I.

The descriptions of kings in the *prasastis* often contain claims that are conventional and therefore of little historical value. One of these conventions is the representation of an imperial ruler as the conqueror or ruler of the entire earth or the *chakravarti-kṣhetra*

¹ *Ep. Ind.*, IX (1907-08), p. 233.

² *Ibid.*, I, p. 145.

(i.e. the sphere of influence of a paramount ruler). This 'earth' was conceived as identical with ancient Bhāratavarsha; but sometimes it was regarded as co-terminous either with Āryāvarta or with Dakṣiṇāpatha.¹ In a number of cases a mere present from the ruler of a distant land is pompously represented as tribute, and a contact of any kind with a king is put up as his subordination to the poet's patron or his ancestors.

I. SEALS

To assure the authenticity of copper-plate grants issued by kings, royal seals were attached to them. These seals are of various kinds. In some cases they are small and only contain the representation of the emblem that was the crest of the family to which the issuer of the grant belonged. Often, however, the name of the king is found in addition to the emblem. Such emblems were generally associated with the religious persuasion of particular royal families. As Śaivism was the dominant religion in different parts of the country in all the ages of history, the representation of the bull (Śiva's *vāhana* called Nandin) is very often noticed on the seals of royal as well as private personages. A number of seals also bear emblems without any religious association. In many cases, the royal seals are large in size. The legends on such seals often mention the names of the kings and those of his ancestors reigning before him. Of some of the large seals the upper half is generally covered by the emblem or emblems and the lower half by the legend. Large numbers of seals (of clay and other materials) of kings, royal officials and private individuals as well as of administrative, mercantile and religious organizations have been discovered in different parts of India.² The writing on the seals is usually positive, although we have some sealings with legends in negative writing as well, the latter being apparently used in sealing documents. Some royal families preferred the engraving of their charters on single plates of copper, while others incised their records on a number of plates (above, p. 219). In the former case, the seal was soldered to the top or left end of the plate. But when a grant was engraved on several plates they were strung together on a ring which passed through a hole in the left end of each plate, and the seal was affixed to the ring. The seal, usually moulded in bronze, was placed on the joint of the copper ring, and its inner part was fixed with the ring with the help of a lump of molten metal completely covering that particular part of the ring. As to the single plates, the seals were so made as to have one knob or a few of them on their back side. The plates had a projection with one or more holes, and the knob or knobs on the back of the seals had to pass through them. The back of the seals was then affixed to the projected part of the plates with a lump of molten metal which totally covered the projection. In some cases, such single plates had no projection, and the holes, meant for the knobs of the seal to pass through, were made on the border of the plate itself. In some multi-plate charters (e.g. the records of the Maitrakas of Valabhī),³ the plates were strung on two rings, but the seal was soldered to only one of them.

J. DATING OF RECORDS

Many of the early inscriptions of northern India are dated according to eras. Some of the eras used are (1) the old Śaka-Pahlava era of 58 B.C., later known as the Kṛita,

¹ *Jour. Roy. Asiatic Soc. Bengal, Letters*, V (1939), pp. 407 ff.

² Cf. *Nālandā and its Epigraphic Material*, Mem. Arch. Surv. Ind., no. 66 (1942); *As. Rep. Arch. Surv. Ind.*, 1903-04 (1906), pp. 101 ff.; 1911-12 (1915), pp. 47 ff.; 1913-14 (1917), pp. 124 ff.; etc.

³ Fleet, *op. cit.*, pp. 164 etc.

Mālava or Vikrama era, (2) the era of A.D. 78, counted from the first year of the reign of the Kushan king Kanishka I and later known as the Śaka era, (3) the era of A.D. 248, used originally by the Abhīras, Traikūṭakas and Kalachuris, (4) the Gupta or Valabhī era of A.D. 320 and (5) the Harsha era of A.D. 606. The dated records have been of great help in solving many problems of chronology in ancient Indian history. The earliest dated Indian records do not, however, bear dates in any era but merely refer to the regnal years of particular monarchs. This was due to the absence of any popular era in ancient India. Kings of many parts of India continued to date their charters in their regnal reckoning even long after the introduction of the use of an era in the country. The custom of employing the years of an era in dating royal charters and private records was popularized in India by foreigners such as the Scytho-Parthians and the Kushans, to whom we owe the Vikrama and Śaka eras.¹

The Śaka-Pahlava era of 58 B.C. originated in Drangiana (east Iran), and its use was carried to the valley of the Indus and Panjab by the Śakas. It was then carried to the Rājputānā and Mālwa regions by the Mālavas who originally lived in Panjab. From Rājputānā it was carried to the U.P. by the Maukharis. The popularity of this era in north India gradually increased owing to its adoption by such imperial ruling families of that region as the Gurjara-Pratihāras. About the eighth century A.D. it came to be associated with king Vikramāditya of Indian tradition which developed on the basis of the achievements of the Gupta Vikramādityas, specially of Chandragupta II (376-414), the extirpator of the Śakas of western India. The use of the Śaka era, which started from the accession of the Kushan emperor Kanishka I in A.D. 78, was continued by these Śakas, who were originally feudatories of the Kushans, till the end of their rule in about the beginning of the fifth century. Owing to the continued use of the era by the Śakas, it came to be known in western India and its neighbourhood as the era of the Śaka kings.² Its great popularity in southern India was due to its adoption by the Chālukya emperors of Badāmi in the first half of the sixth century. Another factor that contributed considerably to the spread of both the Vikrama and Śaka eras was their acceptance by the astronomers of the Ujjayini school and by the Jains who were greatly responsible for the development of the Śaka-Sālivāhana and Vikramāditya sagas. The popularity of the Śaka era in the Kannaḍa-speaking area of the Deccan appears to have been the result of the influence of the Jaina astronomers and statesmen in the courts of the rulers of Karnaṭaka.³

K. EPIGRAPHS IN GREATER INDIA

It may be mentioned in this connexion that stone inscriptions in the Sanskrit language, written in the derivatives of the Brāhmī script and often bearing dates in the Śaka era, have been discovered in large numbers in Indonesia, Malaisia and Indo-China. These epigraphs have been of great help to scholars in reconstructing the early history of those lands, which was, like that of India, wrapped in obscurity. Moreover, they tell us the brilliant story of the spread of Indian culture in those parts of the world from both northern and southern India, although south Indian characteristics are more prominent

¹ *Vikrama Volume*, ed. R. K. Mookerji (Ujjain, 1948), pp. 557 ff.

² *Ep. Ind.*, VI (1900-01), p. 7, verse 34 of the text.

³ *The Age of Imperial Unity*, ed. R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker (Bombay, 1951), pp. 125 n. and 144 n.; *Ind. Hist. Quart.*, XXIX (1953), pp. 296-97.

in the records of south-east Asia.¹ Mention has already been made above (p. 216) of the Kharoshthī records in the Prakrit language which were discovered in Central Asia.

3. ARABIC AND PERSIAN INSCRIPTIONS

By Z. A. DESAI

A. STUDY AND PUBLICATION

It is not necessary to describe in detail the work done in the cause of this branch of Indian epigraphy prior to the re-organization of the Archaeological Survey; it can be assessed from the 'List of the published Mohamedan inscriptions of India' compiled by J. Horovitz.* The works quoted therein comprise mainly periodical reports or lists published under the authority of or by the Archaeological Survey after its inception in 1862. There are some literary works also, mainly topographical and biographical, which deal in some way or the other with Arabic and Persian epigraphs, e.g. the *Sairu'l Manāzil* (published in about 1835) by Sangin Beg and *Āthārū's Šanādīd* (1846) by Sayyid Ahmad Khan, both dealing with the monuments of Delhi—the latter containing, in addition, drawings of certain prominent monuments and facsimiles of their inscriptions; *Gaur: its Ruins and Inscriptions* (London, 1878) by J. H. Ravenshaw; *Lahore: its History, Architectural Ruins and Antiquities* (Lahore, 1892) and *Agra: Historical and Descriptive* (Calcutta, 1896), both by Sayyid Muhammad Latif; *Aḥsanu's Siyar* (Agra, A.H. 1320) by Muhammad Akbar Jahan; *Kanzu'l Tawārikh* (Badaun, A.H. 1319) by M. Raziud Din Bismil; and *Tahqīqāt-i-Chishtī* (Lahore, A.H. 1324) by M. Nur Ahmad Chishti. Among the periodicals, the *Asiatic Researches*, *Journal Asiatique*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* and *Indian Antiquary* deserve mention. To H. Blochmann should go the credit of deciphering and publishing a large number of Arabic and Persian inscriptions that were forwarded to him, through the Asiatic Society of Bengal, by officials from various parts of India including those of the Survey. In a way, therefore, the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* may be regarded as a precursor of the epigraphical series started later on by the Survey. To the list given above may be added the *Corpus Inscriptionum Bhavnagari*, a collection of some fiftyone inscriptions from Kāthiāwād (Saurāshtra) and Gujarat, published in 1889 by the former State of Bhavnagar.

However, the handling of the texts in most of the above works is not, and could not be, very careful owing to obvious reasons. The steady and systematic conduction of activities of the Survey after re-organization facilitated the collection of inscriptions. The *Epigraphia Indica*, meant primarily to deal with epigraphical material pertaining to ancient Indian history in general, had published in its second volume only a few Arabic and Persian inscriptions. Greater attention was regarded as necessary for this section of Indian epigraphy after the re-organization; its field began to be widened and consequent upon a large number of Arabic and Persian epigraphs becoming available for study, it was decided to start a biennial supplement to the *Epigraphia Indica* to deal with them. Accordingly, a supplement for 1907-08 was first published under the editorship of

¹ R. C. Majumdar, *Champā* (Lahore, 1927); *Suvarṇadvīpa*, pts. i-ii (Dacca, 1937-38); *Kāmbuja-deśa* (Madras, 1944); etc.

* *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* (E.I.M.), 1909-10, pp. 30-144.

E. Denison Ross. The next issue, for 1909-10, however, assumed independence under the title *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* and was edited by J. Horovitz, Professor of Arabic in the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh, and Government Epigraphist for Muslim Inscriptions. In that issue, he also published the 'List of published Mohamedan inscriptions of India', arranged geographically and aiming 'at bibliographical completeness with regard to inscriptions of which either the text or at least a full translation has been published, omitting all those whose contents have been described only in a general way'.¹ The list was prefaced by a short but scholarly survey of the inscriptions contained therein, with particular reference to their importance and linguistic and palaeographic characteristics. It was also Horovitz's idea to collect and publish records belonging to one ruler or dynasty at one place, as is apparent from his article 'The inscriptions of Muhammad Ibn Sām, Qutbud din Aibeg and Iltutmish', published in the issue for 1911-12. The scheme was pursued by his successor, Ghulam Yazdani, who, as the Government Epigraphist for Muslim inscriptions, edited the next issue. He published two articles, 'The inscriptions of the Turk Sultāns of Delhi' and 'The inscriptions of the Khaljī Sultāns of Delhi and their contemporaries in Bengal'.² However, the scheme proved too ambitious and could not be fully executed, for the material so essential for a project of this nature was not easily available. Still, whenever such material was forthcoming, articles were published on the lines envisaged by this scheme.

Yazdani successfully ran the series for about a quarter century, bringing out in all fourteen issues and one supplement, the last issue being for 1939-40. The fifteenth issue was published as the one for 1949-50 due to the conditions created by the War. To the scholarly zeal and indefatigable industry of this eminent epigraphist this series owes its growth and expansion. It is also to his credit that the publication of the series was never in great arrears, all the more so when we bear in mind that more than half the number of articles were contributed by himself and that he had to carry out this heavy task in his honorary capacity as Muslim Epigraphist to the Government of India, in addition to his duties as Director of Archaeology in Hyderabad State.

The publication of the series was resumed after the termination of war. A full-time post of Assistant Superintendent for Epigraphy for Arabic and Persian inscriptions was created in 1946. The issue for 1949-50, referred to above, was brought out a couple of years later under the editorship of Muhammad Ashraf Husain. It has now been decided that the series should be renamed and the issues for 1951 and 1952 and onwards be designated as *Epigraphia Indica—Arabic and Persian Supplement*.

The number of scholars who have contributed to the series is not large, being only twentyseven. The larger contributions, apart from Yazdani, are by Zafar Hasan, M. Nazim, Shamsud Din Ahmad, Ramsingh Saksena and Khwaja Muhammad Ahmad. It has been observed that of the inscriptions published in the series, Hyderabad State and Bombay Province claim the largest share, the other States being meagrely represented, though a fairly large number of inscriptions is available elsewhere.³ This fact, however, should not be construed to mean that 'regional outlook in the publication of inscriptions'⁴ has been maintained. At the same time, we should not try to justify this on the ground that a large number of inscriptions from northern India have been published by other

¹ *E.I.M.*, 1909-10, p. 30.

² *Ibid.*, 1913-14, pp. 13 ff.; 1917-18, pp. 8 ff.

³ J. Cumming, *Revealing India's Past* (London, 1939), p. 220; V. S. Bendrey, *A Study of Muslim Inscriptions* (Bombay, 1944), p. 22.

⁴ Bendrey, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

agencies. The simple reason for the preponderance of inscriptions from these two States is that greater facilities and opportunities were available for their study to their editors who, stationed in these parts, could easily collect and discover new inscriptions.

Apart from this regular series, the Archaeological Survey has, from time to time, published inscriptions in its series of Memoirs. Thus, for example, a monograph on the inscriptions of Bijāpur, edited by M. Nazim, was published as Memoir no. 49 in 1936, and another, containing a record of all the Qurānic and non-historical epigraphs on the protected monuments in Delhi Province by M. Ashraf Husain, as Memoir no. 47 in the same year.

It is but natural that agencies other than the Survey cannot fully undertake, even if they wish to do, the task of collecting and editing inscriptions, as it requires money and time. It is no wonder, therefore, if we do not find much work done outside the Survey. However, individual scholars have in recent times engaged their attention, if on a small scale, in bringing to light some inscriptions. Thus, fifty-nine inscriptions, mostly from Ahmedabad, of which as many as forty-six are accompanied by facsimiles, were edited and published by M. A. Chaghtai in the *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, III, no. 2 (Poona, 1942). They have also been printed in a separate monograph under the title of *History of Muslim Monuments of Ahmedabad through their Inscriptions* (Poona, 1942). It is true that a few of the inscriptions studied therein had been published elsewhere; nevertheless, the book has a value of its own inasmuch as it presents at one place important historical epigraphs of the region. Also, a few inscriptions studied by different scholars have recently appeared in various learned journals, like the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, *Indian Historical Quarterly* (Calcutta) and *Oriental College Magazine* (Lahore), but their number is not great. Mention may also be made of *A Study of Muslim Inscriptions* (Bombay, 1944), with special reference to the inscriptions published in the *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* from 1907 to 1938, by V. S. Bendrey of Poona; it supplies the 'long-felt want for a reliable, comprehensive and well-equipped Guide, prepared on scientific lines and leading through labyrinthine shafts to the veritable mine of epigraphical material treasured in the volumes of the Journal' (*Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica*). It also contains summaries of inscriptions chronologically arranged and four appendices. The introductory portion of the study not only explains the principles on which a practical, precise and scientific approach to a methodical study of epigraphical material should be based but also contains very valuable suggestions for future workers in this branch of research.

B. THE NATURE OF THE RECORDS

Arabic and Persian inscriptions are available in India from the last decade of the twelfth century A.D.; those that bear an earlier date are either from outside or are later than the date they contain. The findspots of the earliest epigraphs, only a few in number, are the Qutb premises at Delhi, Arhāi Din kā Jhonpra at Ajmer and the tomb of Shāh Ni'matu'llāh Shāhid at Hansi. The number goes on increasing in the subsequent centuries, but it is the largest in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which saw the zenith of Muslim rule in India. After this, a decrease set in. Of the various parts of the country, Panjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Bombay and Hyderabad are comparatively rich in inscriptions, while Madras is the poorest. Among the individual towns and cities where they are found in quite a number are Bijāpur, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Fatehpur Sikri and Agra, Ajmer, Gulbarga, Hansi, Gaur, Bihar, Pāndua, Māldā, etc.

The majority of these inscriptions is to be found on mosques, tombs and similar religious buildings. They give, as a rule, the date of their construction or repairs, etc.,

along with the names of the reigning monarch and the builder. In some cases, inscriptions are found on monuments other than what they originally belonged to, having been brought from outside in order to be saved from destruction or out of fear lest the religious verses inscribed therein might be subjected to disrespect. Thus, we occasionally come across epitaphs appearing on mosques and mosque-inscriptions fixed up on graves. Among inscriptions on non-religious buildings, frequent are those recording the erection of or repairs carried out to forts, bastions, fort-walls, gateways, roads, granaries, etc. Next in number come those which may be termed as administrative, containing purport of orders or mandates proclaiming the abolition of certain taxes, prohibiting some unlawful or undesirable practices or making adjustments of public grievances. Some of them are deeds of endowments made in favour of the mosques or such other religious places for their proper maintenance, etc. There are also a few which appear on stones indicating boundaries or on slabs fixed up commemorating the visit to or halt at the respective places by eminent personages, especially the emperor. Among the latter, those of Akbar's time deserve special mention. Most of them, carved by Mīr Muḥammad Ma'sūm Nāmī of Bakkar, an author and a nobleman, commemorate Akbar's expedition to and victory over Khāndesh and the Deccan and his halts in the course of his journey to and back from these places. Another group of buildings of public utility on which quite a number of inscriptions appear comprises tanks, wells, *madrasas*, palaces, gardens, bridges, caravan-sarais, etc.

Apart from stone slabs there are numerous movable objects bearing inscriptions. They include arms, seals, signets, vases, vessels, precious stones, etc. Out of these, a few inscriptions on guns and swords have been published; the rest being mostly in private custody, the inscriptions on them are not easily accessible for reference. Copper plates were not common in the Muslim period, though a few belonging to the later period are available.

C. LANGUAGE

As regards their language, the majority is written in Persian, many are in Arabic, some partly in Arabic and partly in Persian. Some are bilingual records, written in Arabic or Persian and one of the Indian languages—Sanskrit or a regional language like Marathi, Kannada or Telugu. Inscriptions have been found, though very few, where the record is trilingual. The earliest inscriptions of India are all in Arabic except one, which is reckoned as the earliest of the Arabic and Persian records, to wit, the inscription on the Quwwatu'l Islām mosque, Delhi, dated A.H. 587. Attention is, however, called to the remarks of Horowitz, who edited this inscription, that it seems to have been set up a few years later than its date.¹ Arabic continued to be the language of inscriptions till the last decades of the thirteenth century. After the accession of the Khaljis Persian is found regularly adopted for epigraphical records; thus, from the early years of the fourteenth century we find Persian freely used in epigraphs. The subsequent period saw a greater popularity of Persian, though Arabic is not found totally replaced; for, apart from religious inscriptions that continued to be written in Arabic, there were places like Bengal where Persian does not seem to have found favour against Arabic. From the sixteenth century onwards, synchronizing with the establishment of the Mughul rule in India, Persian acquired full recognition in state-records as well as in epigraphy and almost completely replaced Arabic in the first half of the eighteenth century. Urdu made its

¹ *E.I.M.*, 1911-12, pp. 13-14.

appearance only once in the middle of the eighteenth century.¹ We may, however, mention a chronogram of the erection of a mosque in what is termed as old Urdu, appearing in an inscription from Ahmedabad dated A.H. 963.² In quite recent times Urdu is found replacing Persian.

The Arabic epigraphs are all in prose with only very few exceptions. Of these latter, one dated A.H. 713 from Zafar Khān's mosque at Tribeni, District Hooghly in Bengal, is remarkable inasmuch as it is the earliest of its kind in India; it also provides the earliest chronogram in Arabic and Persian inscriptions.³ The older Persian inscriptions are often composed in prose—the earliest dated epigraph in verse found so far being that of 'Alāu'd Dīn Khaljī from Hansi⁴; later on verse became more and more common. It is not within the compass of this brief survey to go into details of the linguistic merits of the epigraphs; it would suffice to say that a majority of these inscriptions does not always show grammatical accuracy; far from being good literary compositions, they even betray utter disregard for elementary rules of prosody.

D. PALAEOGRAPHY AND CALLIGRAPHY

The Arabic and Persian epigraphs in India, as elsewhere,⁵ have a twofold importance: historical and palaeographic. Their palaeographic aspect represents a diversity of scripts beautifully executed as also an ingenious ornamentation. Some of the inscriptions bear perfect specimens of extraordinary calligraphy and as such can compete favourably with their counterparts on paper. The main scripts used in epigraphs are Kūfic, Naskh including its variety Thulth and Nasta'liq, each executed with its distinctive conventional styles varying according to period, locality and ingenuity of the calligraphists (pls. CXIII and CXIV). Thus, two styles of Kūfic are to be found, simple and ornamental (pl. CXIII A). But the number of epigraphs in this script is very small. Most of the inscriptions of the pre-Mughul period are inscribed in Naskh in its various forms or aspects (pls. CXIII B and CXIV C). The Naskh of these inscriptions is of a vigorous, rigid and, in some cases, bold type. The script, employed in some parts of the country, especially those under the rules of Bengal and Gujarat Sultāns, developed an individuality of its own as is reflected in most of the inscriptions from these places. What has been termed as decorative Tughrā style of Bengal, also characteristic of a large number of Gujarat inscriptions, is distinctively ornamental (pl. CXIV A). The elongated shafts and curves of letters have been so arranged under this style as to form different motifs: the arrangement of curved letters across the arrow-headed ones representing the motif of bow and arrow—a device so commonly found in these inscriptions that some scholars have termed this style as 'bow-and-arrow style'; or the motif representing 'the passing of an army with raised banners, the flags being either conspicuous or disturbed by the intervention of a row of knotted ropes representing the halters some time hung below banner heads, the cluster of letters at the foot of the straight-drawn vertical lines representing the thick mass of soldiers which

¹ *E.I.M.*, 1909-10, p. 31.

² *Ibid.*, 1935-36, p. 51.

³ *Ibid.*, 1917-18, pp. 33-34.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19. The inscription of the same king from Mathurā though fragmentary and undated is yet earlier. *Ibid.*, 1937-38, p. 60.

⁵ For van Berchem's observations on epigraphical styles in other Muslim countries, see *E.I.M.*, 1913-14, Appendix C, p. 46. For illustrations of a few inscriptions from other countries carved in various scripts, see M. Ziauddin, *Moslem Calligraphy* (Calcutta, 1936).

in old times formed an interwoven group during a march'.¹ The device of bow and arrow can be made to represent, by a minor change, the motif of a row of arches or railings.² At times, some of the letters have been made into interesting animal-forms.

A typical example of the Tughrā style is that in which the text is written in such a way as to form the outlines of birds and animals. Such forms were intended to serve as a security against evil. Among these, the lion or the tiger—these being symbolic of the valour of 'Alī, 'Lion of God'—are 'freely carved on forts in the Deccan which were extensively rebuilt in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by the Muslim kings of Shiite faith'. The text of such inscriptions is generally some prayer, comprising a religious text or a quotation from the Qurān, the Nād-i-'Alī being more frequent.³

Nasta'liq made its appearance in inscriptions immediately after the first quarter of the tenth century Hijra, and within the next two hundred years it almost entirely replaced Naskh, which, except for its more artistic variety *Thulth*, was more or less reserved, like Kūfic in the earlier period, for religious inscriptions in Arabic. *Thulth* and Nasta'liq in their exquisitely beautiful form are represented by a number of inscriptions from all parts of the country as a mere glance at the plates of *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* will show (cf. pls. CXIII G and CXIV B).

E. HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE

Apart from their palaeographic value, these inscriptions are historically important. It is true that they 'do not as a rule furnish any extraneous details as are generally met with' in their other Indian counterparts; but it should be remembered, first, that the latter have attained a special importance owing to the dearth of historical sources pertaining to the earlier periods of Indian history, which is not the case with the Muslim period, and, secondly, the state-documents during Muslim period were mostly written on paper, like *farmāns*, *sanads*, etc., which, in their subject-matter, correspond to the copper-plates of the earlier period and refer to grants of land or cash-stipends and to royal mandates of various natures supplying historical information. Nevertheless, these inscriptions still afford very valuable and definite data for the reconstruction of history in its various aspects, political, social and religious. The inscriptions are at times the only source which supplies the missing links in the chronology of rulers, in spite of the availability of chronicles and historical works. Moreover, they sometimes throw light on events and personages unrecorded in literature, correct anachronisms or incongruity, prove useful in fixing the dates of important events in history where the information from other sources is confusing or conflicting. In many a case, they corroborate statements of historians or supply details left out in chronicles. They also provide links in the reconstruction of the succession-lists of public officials and families. Like coins, they have an advantage over the historical works inasmuch as they have preserved unto us the correct names of places and persons, this uncorruptibility of names not being vouchsafed by chronicles. The inscriptions on various buildings, if carefully used, are also a valuable source for the history of architecture. Below is given a brief résumé of a few historically important epigraphs illustrating some of the above remarks.

The kingship of Kaikā'ūs, son of Nāṣiru'd Dīn Bughrā Khān, whose name was omitted from the list of the rulers of Bengal as given by Persian historians, is affirmed by

¹ *E.I.M.*, 1923-24, p. 18 and pl. VII.

² *Ibid.*, 1935-36, pl. XXXVI(a).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 44, pl. XXX(a).

no less than three inscriptions, respectively from Lakhīsarai, Monghyr District, Devīkot, Dinājpur District, and from Zafar Khān's mosque at Tribeni, Hooghly District.¹ Three inscriptions from Antur fort and another from Kamānī mosque at Junnar, Poona District, are helpful in fixing the dates of Burhān Nizām Shāh III of Ahmednagar,² while the one from the tomb of Kamāl Maulā at Dhār in Mālwa shows that Maḥmūd Tughluq was the ruling king already in A.H. 795, and not 796 as asserted by historians.³ It was mainly on the basis of the inscription from the Jāmi' Masjid at Golconda that Yazdani tried to prove that Sultān Qulī Qutbu'l Mulk did not assume independence in A.H. 918 (A.D. 1512) as stated by Firishṭa but in A.H. 924 (A.D. 1518). The inscription mentions the name of Maḥmūd Shāh Bahmanī as the reigning monarch and styles Sultān Qulī who built the mosque as 'Sultān Qulī Qutbu'l Mulk' without the title of Shāh.⁴ No doubt, the inscription fully establishes that Sultān Qulī did not assume royal titles until A.H. 924, but whether he did so only in that year is still open to question. The inscription at the foot of his grave at Golconda⁵ and two more from Kondapalli bearing the dates A.H. 931 and A.H. 945⁶ should not be lost sight of while deciding the question of the assumption of kingship by Sultān Qulī. In these inscriptions he is only mentioned with his title Qutbu'l Mulk.

An inscription dated A.H. 794 (1391-92) carved on a tablet lying near the tomb of Haḍrat Ṣūfī Sarmast at Sāgar, District Gulbarga, mentions the name of the Bahmanid king as Muhammad Maḥmūd. Firishṭa, while objecting to the statements of the author of the *Futūḥ's Salāṭīn* and some other writers of Gujarat and Delhi, who had styled the king as Muhammad Shāh Bahmanī, gave the name of the king as Maḥmūd Shāh Bahmanī. This inscription thus shows the lack of justification of Firishṭa's remarks against the above authors.⁷ The inscription of Walīu'llāh, son of Maḥmūd Shāh Bahmanī, dated A.H. 932, carved on a tablet originally lying in the 'Āshūr Khāna at the same place, provides valuable evidence in view of the fact that the chronology of the later Bahmanids is not very clear either from the lists of medieval and modern authors or from their coins.⁸ The style in which the title *Sawāi* has been used with Mallū Khān's name—Sawāi Mallū Khān son of 'Adil Khān Sawāi, in his inscription settles conclusively the controversy regarding the significance of this word and shows that it has been used as an honorific title and has nothing to do with the town Sāwa.⁹

The inscription on Zafar Khān's mosque at Tribeni, District Hooghly, dated A.H. 713, mentions the names of the ruling king Firūz Shāh of Bengal (1302-18) and of his deputy Zafar Khān with full titles, which are not to be found on coins or in contemporary history.¹⁰

The name of Zafar Khān Fārsī, a celebrated noble under Firūz Shāh Tughluq and governor of Gujarat, can now be ascertained for the first time from an inscription from Una, District Sorath in Saurāshṭra. This inscription was published in the *Corpus Inscriptionum*

¹ *E.I.M.*, 1917-18, pp. 8-15.

² *Ibid.*, 1919-20, pp. 12-15; 1933-34 (Supp.), pp. 22-23.

³ *Ibid.*, 1909-10, p. 15.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1913-14, pp. 47-48; 1915-16, p. 19, n. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1915-16, p. 27.

⁶ These inscriptions are being published in *Epigraphia Indica, Arabic and Persian Suppl.*, 1953 and 1954.

⁷ *E.I.M.*, 1931-32, pp. 10-11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1931-32, pp. 19-20.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1939-40, pp. 11-12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1917-18, pp. 33-34.

Bhāmagari in 1889.¹ The reading of the inscription as given there being miserably corrupt, especially as regards the name and date, the importance of the epigraph was not recognized so far. The correct reading of the name and date is Muḥammad surnamed Tāj and 768 respectively. He is further mentioned therein as having received the title Zafar Khān from the said king.

An interesting inscription, appearing on a well in Narsāpur in Hyderabad State, mentions the construction of the well, purer than the Kauthar, by Khāfi Khān, the celebrated author of the *Muntakhabu'l Lubāb*, a historical work in Persian. The important feature of the inscription is the spelling of the title of Khāfi Khān (his original name being Muḥammad Hāshim), which has given rise to much speculation as regards its significance.² Another historian of Aurangzīb's reign, Rāi Bindrāban, author of the *Lubbu't Tawārikh*, finds mention in an inscription, also on a well, at Elgandal, Hyderabad State.³

Of a number of inscriptions recording royal orders and *farmāns* we shall notice only three. The bilingual epigraph from the Pangal Tank in Nalgondā District lays down the share of the proceeds of the lands irrigated by the tank to be divided between the king, the subjects (tenants) and the Turks (army). The share of the army was nearly as much as that of the king and the tenants combined.⁴ A Persian inscription in verse, originally from Dabhol, about 85 miles south of Bombay, records briefly the purport of a *farmān* issued in A.H. 1062 under the order of Muḥammad 'Adil Shāh of Bijāpur. The prevailing practice of confiscation by the local authorities of the property of an individual, whether a Hindu or a Muslim, who died without leaving a direct heir, seems to have caused much inconvenience to the public, and on the matter being represented to the king, he issued a *farmān* to discontinue it.⁵ A couple of inscriptions of the reign of Aurangzīb set up at various places in the former Jūnāgarh State contain a notice issued by Shāh Wardī Khān, governor of Sorath in A.H. 1097, stopping the practice of compelling the merchants to purchase the produce of the lands of the governors in whole lots and levying certain prohibited imposts.⁶

Among the epigraphs commemorating historical events such as conquests of towns, one from the right door-jamb of the Phūṭā Darwāza of the fort at Asīr, District Nīmār, is very interesting. Comprising nine verses in Persian, it gives a brief résumé of events connected with the fort from A.H. 1034 thus: Prince Shāh Jahān's march towards east from the Deccan in that year, leaving the fort with all his effects in it in the custody of Raja Gopāldās; the Raja's war with Prince Parwīz and Mahābat Khān for two years until Shāh Jahān's return and the Raja's victory with the reinforcement of the latter; his elevation in rank and receipt of the title of Rāj Māndhātā; Shāh Jahān's march to Thatta, where the Raja and his eldest son, Raja Balarām were killed; the appointment, in 1063, of the other son of the Raja, Kunwar Manohar Dās, as the commandant of the fort and his construction of the gateway in the following year.⁷

Among a few inscriptions which throw light on the Hindu-Muslim relations are some from the tomb of Shāh Ramaḍān at Madhi, District Ahmednagar, which, though

¹ The inscription will be re-edited in a future issue of the *Epigraphia Indica, Arabic and Persian Suppl.*

² *E.I.M.*, 1917-18, pp. 4-7.

³ *Ibid.*, 1919-20, p. 28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1925-26, p. 23.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1933-34, p. 9.

⁶ *Corp. Insc. Bhav.*, pp. 47 and 48.

⁷ *E.I.M.*, 1925-26, p. 7.

not of much historical value, show the reverence in which the Maratha leaders mentioned in them held Pīr Shāh Ramadān.¹ Two Persian inscriptions from a temple in Dhum in Madhya Bharat, though undated and without mention of any ruler, are interesting inasmuch as their subject-matter presents an example of veneration and toleration of a Hindu place of worship by the Muslims.² Similarly, Rāo Gumānjī Sindhiya and Bālā Rāo Ingliya are stated to have constructed the *dālān* (hall) in the *dargāh* of Shāh Husain Khing Sawār at Tārāgarh, Ajmer, according to an inscription appearing on it.³

¹ *E.I.M.*, 1933-34 (Supplement), pp. 16-17.

² *Ibid.*, 1935-36, p. 54.

³ *Ibid.*, 1911-12, p. 46. For further instances illustrating the historical importance of inscriptions, see *Ancient India*, no. 5 (1949), pp. 58-61.